

The Calling of Dan Matthews

CHAPTER I.

THE HOME OF THE ALLY

"And because the town of this story is what it is, there came to dwell in it a Spirit—a strange, mysterious power—playful, vicious, deadly; a Something to be at once feared and courted; to be denied—yet confessed in the denial; a deadly enemy, a welcome friend, an all-powerful Ally."



HIS story began in the Ozark Mountains. It follows the trail that is nobody knows how old. But mostly this story happened in Corinth, a town of the middle class in a Middle Western state.

There is nothing peculiar about Corinth. The story might have happened just as well in any other place, for the only distinguishing feature about this town is its utter lack of any distinguishing feature whatever. In all the essential elements of its life, so far as this story goes, Corinth is exactly like every other village, town or city in the land. This, indeed, is why the story happened in this particular place.

Years ago, when the railroad first climbed the